

VZCZCXRO3875  
PP RUEHPA  
DE RUEHAB #1372/01 3471226  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 131226Z DEC 06  
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2295  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1483  
RUEHKE/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0384

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 001372

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

KINSHASA PASS TO BRAZZAVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2016  
TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [IV](#)  
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: MILITARY REPORTS ALLEGED COUP PLOT

Classified By: POL/ECON Jim Wojtasiewicz, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. On December 12 the press spokesman of the defense and security forces announced that a coup plot had been uncovered, involving the assassination of President Gbagbo, the armed forces chief of staff, and several other top security force commanders. The man accused of being the mastermind is an associate of both former Prime Minister Ouattara, who is a leading candidate to oppose Gbagbo in the presidential elections, and Prime Minister Banny. There have been two coup attempts here in recent years, and the specter of coups haunts this country. However, it was more likely a staged event under the direction of the Presidency, aimed at discrediting Ouattara, intimidating Banny, and perhaps laying the groundwork for postponing elections -- a sign that Gbagbo is worried about the prospect of facing elections that he does not fully control. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On December 12, Colonel Hilaire Babri Gohourou, spokesman for the Ivoirian Security and Defense Forces, read a statement on television announcing that security forces had uncovered plans for a coup attempt by civilians and members of the military. He said the coup was to have taken place some time between December 12 and 16, and was to have included the assassination of President Gbagbo, armed forces chief of staff general Mangou, the commander of the national gendarmerie, and several other top commanders in the defense and security forces. Gohourou alleged that "the mastermind behind the operation is a personality who is an active member of a local political party."

¶3. (C) The man Gohourou was referring to is Adama Bictogo, who is associated with the opposition RDR (Rally of Republicans) party and its leader Alassane Ouattara. He is also an advisor to Prime Minister Banny. Furthermore, Bictogo seeks in the next parliamentary elections to unseat Mamadou Koulibaly, President of the former National Assembly and a close Gbagbo ally, in his electoral district of Koumassi in Abidjan. Koulibaly recently publicly attacked Bictogo, accusing him of being supported by France. Bictogo was reportedly involved along with Banny's nephew in having T-shirts printed with the slogan, "The streets for Banny." The nephew was arrested and held for ten days.

¶4. (C) Abou Moussa, the Acting UN Special Representative of the Secretary General, told the Ambassador that General Mangou called General Amoussou, the force commander for the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (ONUCI), one night last week at 2:00 a.m. to inform Amoussou that security forces were going to the Golf Hotel to arrest Bictogo. ONUCI provides security protection at the Golf Hotel for opposition members participating in the government, and Moussa said Amoussou refused to allow Mangou's men to arrest Bictogo there. Press spokesman Gohourou in his TV statement said the alleged

mastermind behind the coup plot is currently "under the protection of his sponsors" after being "exfiltrated" from the hotel.

15. (C) Comment. The possibility of a genuine coup attempt cannot entirely be ruled out. Gbagbo has reason to fear a coup attempt, after the failed coup attempt against him in 2002 and the successful coup against President Bedie in 2000. Furthermore, as we have previously reported, there are growing divisions within the security forces, and increasing frustration in some quarters over the impunity with which the pro-Gbagbo militias defy the security forces, and the preferential treatment they get over them.

16. (C) That said, this incident has all the markings of a staged event, similar to the other highly suspicious incidents earlier this year in which unknown elements were alleged to have attacked the security forces but no serious investigation was ever done and the incidents appeared to have actually been staged under the direction of the Presidency. Indeed, in the last two-plus years, the President and those working for him have told the Ambassador of several coup plots that had been uncovered, all of which turned out to be figments of someone's imagination or pure inventions by Gbagbo's intelligence services to justify their existence.

17. (C) We see signs in this incident that the Gbagbo camp is worried about the prospect of facing elections that they do not fully control. Arresting Bictogo could well have been aimed at discrediting Ouattara, a leading presidential candidate, and intimidating Banny as he tries to prepare for free and fair elections. Manufacturing this kind of threat against the state could also be a way to prepare the groundwork for postponing the elections. It is also

ABIDJAN 00001372 002 OF 002

interesting that the coup plot was announced by the military rather than the intelligence services, perhaps an attempt to align the military even more closely with President Gbagbo.  
End Comment.

Hooks